

Fall 2022 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the mentorship of a partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the [application guide](#) to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at midnight on Sunday September 18, 2022.

Project title: Research to understand the potential impact of life transitions to shift people to low carbon lifestyles

Project Background & Overview:

This project supports an untapped opportunity: the climate potential of life transitions. How can we support a new student, a new parent, an immigrant, the newly retired, someone moving to a city, or changing careers to live in a climate friendly way?

Household consumption is “responsible for up to 60 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and between 50 and 80 percent of total land, material, water use” ([Ivanova et al. 2016](#)). We need to shift globally from an average of more than 4 tonnes of carbon emissions per person per year to less than 1 tonne by 2050 according to a 2019 report on [1.5 Degree Lifestyles](#) (Akenji et al. 2019). Per capita consumption emissions of those in the global top 10 percent of income earners need to be reduced to about one-tenth of their current level by 2030 and those of the top 1 per cent by at least a factor of 30 ([Capstick et al 2020](#)).

The IPCC Working Group 3 report shares that “changes from our lifestyles and behaviour can reduce our carbon footprint as well as improve our health and wellbeing. There is an untapped potential to bring down the climate emissions by 40-70% by 2050, but only if the necessary policies, infrastructure and technology are in place” ([IPCC 2022](#)). The [UN Emissions Gap Report 2020](#) showcases how much of North Americans’ high (average) footprints are contextual (culture, infrastructure) and so show the possibility of a dramatic change while maintaining a high quality of life. For example, “current per capita consumption emissions in the United States of America are approximately 17.6 tons CO₂e per capita. By contrast, the European Union and the United Kingdom together have an average footprint of approximately 7.9 tons per capita” (UN 2022).

So, if transformations in our day-to-day lives are critical for achieving sustainability, how do we mainstream household actions that reduce our climate impact? How do we shift the routines of everyday life and ensure policy, market and infrastructures support sustainable living? Some see

great potential in redirecting our daily practices when our lives and habits are already in flux during life transitions (e.g., [Burningham and Venn, 2017](#)).

Life transitions include becoming a parent, retiring, starting college, changing jobs, immigrating, and many more. These are times when our lives are shifting and we lock in new behaviours. It is possible to support people in making a series of environmentally beneficial choices and establishing low-carbon practices.

There is a need to mainstream key climate actions, including those associated with climate priorities to do with home energy use, active transportation, extending the life of goods. Life transition moments are an often-overlooked solution space in the transition to sustainability, as a time when habits and behaviours change. This research project increases the capacity in British Columbia for understanding and acting upon the strategic moments for change towards sustainability in several specific climate action areas.

Project description:

OneEarth would like to learn from and apply this research in its action-oriented work on sustainable living in British Columbia. Lessons learned can also be applied globally. The outcomes of this project help to determine a strategy for engaging new and unlikely allies in British Columbia such as school guidance counsellors or wedding planners who can support mainstreaming climate actions around home energy, active transportation, and the extended life of goods.

This project involves analyzing what opportunities emerge to intervene during life transitions to support people to shift to low carbon behaviours, and sustainable lifestyle and consumption practices with a specific focus on three areas of daily life (active transport, home energy use, and goods). The Scholar will explore which organisations (e.g., second-hand stores, banks, immigration support) in BC can become “allies” in mainstreaming climate-friendly behaviours like buying second-hand or insulating our homes.

The Scholar can explore 1-3 of the following climate priorities:

1. **Mobility** and how life transitions might enable shifts away from fossil fuel transportation (private cars and air travel), and towards lower-carbon options like walking, cycling, public transit, electric vehicles (charged using renewable energy), combining trips and carpooling, and moving to walkable neighbourhoods.
2. **Home energy** use and how life transitions support shifting away from fossil fuels to heat and cool our homes, and towards renewable energy and electrified options such as heat pumps. This extends to other ways of making living spaces more efficient, including living and working in smaller spaces, increased space sharing, undertaking retrofits and using low-impact building materials.
3. **Household goods** and how people might move to favour sharing, reuse and repair which extends the life of their stuff (and buying new only when needed).

Project scope

The project will be scoped to the Scholar's interests and capacity. The Scholar can focus on one of the climate priorities or all three. They can focus on one life transition moment (e.g., starting school, retirement) or more than one.

The Scholar will undertake a broad analysis to understand how to support climate action during a life transition. This will include:

- A review of current literature and practice on the selected climate priority (ies) (home energy use, active transportation, goods) and selected life transition(s) in relation to mainstreaming sustainable living.
- Exploration of at least one and up to three of the climate priority areas in detail, to develop a rich understanding of the selected life transition(s) opportunities.
- Interviews with at least 5 different actors that support the climate priority during transition moments (e.g., birth of a child). If more than one priority is selected, the number of interviews per topic will be reduced to ensure the workload is manageable.
 - Based on the interviews and (time-permitting) additional desk research to create a list of potential "allies" for life transition moments that relate to the climate priorities, e.g., home contractors, wedding planners, bank staff, guidance counsellors.
- Research on the field of sustainable living and life transition moments to support the final report including:
 - Interviewing 2 to 3 researchers/practitioners in the field of sustainable living and life transition moments to understand the current research and research questions.
 - Reviewing longitudinal studies of selected life transition(s) (such as people becoming parents, retiring, immigrating, starting a new phase of life (e.g., going to college, changing careers) and identifying the opportunities and barriers to switching to sustainable living choices and practices. The Scholar will also be provided with relevant data from a recent study of BCers' motivations for climate action to review and incorporate into the report.
- Prepare a report that identifies opportunities in Southwest British Columbia which brings together the 1 to 3 climate priorities with opportunities around 1 or more life transitions, with further depth on 2 to 3 specific opportunities. This should include a set of recommendations for further study and action.

Deliverables

- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#) containing a summary of the work completed including:
 - a broad overview of the opportunity space presented by selected life transition moment(s);
 - analysis of the state of play in Southwest BC;
 - deeper analysis on 1 to 3 climate priorities and the key local actors that could be engaged (or are already making those links);

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- 2-page summaries of each of the 1 to 3 climate priorities.
- recommendations for further study and action
- An executive summary of the report with recommendations, using straightforward language that can serve as a standalone piece. Graphic design support will be provided, including the creation of infographics. Suggested images are welcomed.
- Summary of interviews with stakeholders, with contact information, for internal use.
- A final presentation to key stakeholders.

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete.
- This project must be completed between October 17, 2022 and March 15, 2023
- The Scholars is to complete hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 10 to 12 hours per week.

Preferred Skills

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys
- Ability to work independently
- Project management and organisational skills
- Interest in or familiarity with behaviour change practices or theories, an asset

Applications close **midnight Sunday September 18, 2022**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>